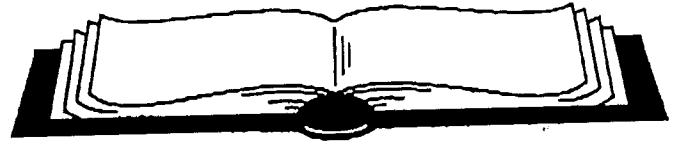
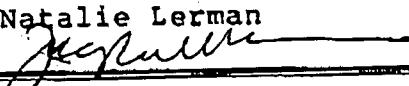


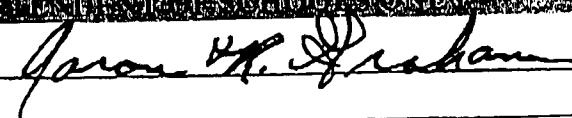
NEW JERSEY

2002-2003
Guidelines and
ApplicationBEST
PRACTICES

The Best Practices application is a public document. The information that you provide will serve as the official record. Review the application prior to submission to ensure accuracy and adherence to the guidelines. Type or keyboard the information requested on this page and page 2, if applicable.

Category	<u>Special Education</u>	(Application is limited to one category. See page 3 for details.)
Practice Name	<u>PAL (Peer Activated Learning)</u>	
Number of Schools with Practice	<u>1</u>	(If more than one school or district, read and complete information on page 2.)

County	<u>Bergen</u>		
District (Proper Name)	<u>Ridgefield Park</u>		
Address	Street/P.O. Box <u>712 Lincoln Avenue</u> <u>City Ridgefield Park, N.J. 07660</u> Zip Code		
Telephone	<u>201-807-2640</u>	Fax <u>201-641-2203</u>	Email <u>jrichardson@rpps.net</u>
Chief School Administrator	<u>Dr. John Richardson</u>		
Nominated School #1 (Proper Name)	<u>Lincoln Elementary School</u>		
Address	Street/P.O. Box <u>Ridgefield Park, N.J. 07660</u> Zip Code		
Telephone	<u>201-994-1831</u>	Fax <u>201-994-1626</u>	Email <u>tkraljic@rpps.net</u>
Principal	<u>Thomas Kraljic</u>		
Program Developer(s)	<u>Natalie Lerman, Maureen Gibbs, Patricia Congalton</u>		
Application Prepared By	<u>Natalie Lerman</u>		
Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature			

Approved: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No County Superintendent's Signature 	
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NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**NEW JERSEY
BEST PRACTICES
2002-2003 APPLICATION**

Failure to comply with the procedures for submission of the application will result in the elimination of the application.

Application Requirements:

1. **RESPONSES** to the information and the statements below must be **ANONYMOUS** and **ACCURATE**. No reference should be made to the names of the district, the school(s) or community. Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in responding to the statements
2. **USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM** on pages 1, 2 (if applicable), and 4. Do not include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.
3. Applications must be typed on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, portrait format. Twelve-point or larger computer font or fourteen-pitch or larger typewritten font must be used. This sentence is in twelve-point Times New Roman.
4. Keybaorded responses to all the statements below must be no more than a total of four pages. Keyboard and number the statement followed by the response. Format your response for clarity.
5. **The information on page 4 and the responses to statements must be copied on one side of the page.** The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) must be copied on one side of the page. Staple pages 1, 2 (if applicable), 4, and the keyboarded responses together, in that same order.
6. The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.
7. **The original and seven copies of the application must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by December 15, 2002, with the Itemized List of District Applications form.** Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:		
Type of School	Grade Levels	Practice Name <u>PAL</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elementary School	<u>K-6</u>	<u>Peer Activated Learning</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Middle School	<u> </u>	Number of Schools with Practice <u>1</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior High School	<u> </u>	Number of Districts with Practice <u> </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> High School	<u> </u>	Location <input type="checkbox"/> Urban/City <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Suburban With Urban Characteristics
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: <u> </u>	<u> </u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input type="checkbox"/> Small City/Town <input type="checkbox"/> Rural

Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits:		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arts and Performing Arts <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Evaluation <input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship/Character Education <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity and Equity Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Support Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Gifted and Talented Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Guidance and Counseling Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Physical Education <input type="checkbox"/> Languages Arts/Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development <input type="checkbox"/> Public Engagement (family involvement and partnerships with business, community, school districts, and/or higher education)	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe Learning Environment <input type="checkbox"/> School-to-Careers/Workplace Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> Science <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Special Education <input type="checkbox"/> World Languages/Bilingual Education

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.
2. List the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards*, including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards*,* addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.
3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.
4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

*The 2002 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's web site at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>.

1. **Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.**

Peer Activated Learning is a unique program based on the premise of "reverse inclusion." It opens the door of the self-contained special education autistic classroom and invites general education students to enter and become part of the setting. Students, both disabled and non-disabled engage in activities together that are motivating, enjoyable and provide valuable learning experiences. Both disabled and non-disabled learn from one another.

The objectives of the program are:

- Provide opportunities for non-disabled students to interact with their disabled peers and develop social interaction skills of the disabled students.
- Promote friendships between disabled students and non-disabled students.
- Promote awareness and understanding and desensitize the general education students, parents and teachers to the challenging behaviors of the autistic students.
- Increase communication skills of the autistic students.
- Engage in cooperative play and work activities.
- Expand abilities of the non-disabled students to set personal goals and to meet challenges.

General education students volunteer during their lunch playtime/recess to interact with the students in the autistic class. Prior to the program formally beginning, the special education teacher leads an orientation for the volunteer students. The teacher discusses the unusual social behaviors as well as the limited verbal skills displayed by the students in the class and the educational programs developed for the autistic students, e.g. one-on-one instruction, discrete trial teaching and augmentative technology. The teacher models specific approaches for communicating with the student, increasing eye contact and teaching social skills and social strategies through meaningful play experiences. Questions are encouraged from the non-disabled peers and they usually have many. At first the questions relate to the look of the classroom, e.g., the screened instructional areas, the sensory mats the augmentative devices. As the program unfolds, the volunteers ask questions on how to engage and better communicate with their autistic peers.

The program was introduced last year with five volunteers from second and third grade. This year, the program was made available to second through sixth graders. There are now approximately 25 student volunteers. Due to the large number of volunteers, each peer group has a scheduled cycle for visiting the autistic class and participating as a peer volunteer. To ensure the generalization of learned skills, activities include, but are not limited, to arts and crafts,

cooking, and using various manipulative toys and games. Skills that are addressed are communication, sensory-motor, fine and gross motor, self-help, cognitive, and social interaction and play skills.

As time progresses, the volunteers become sensitive to the unique needs of the autistic students and understand their individual personalities, strengths and learning and communicating needs. The volunteers learn to understand the need for the augmentative communication devices and learn to use prompting techniques to draw out language. They often make suggestions for specific activities for the peer session and use the instructional approaches modeled by the teacher and classroom aides. Friendships bloom and the autistic students appear to enjoy the camaraderie and social interactions with their new friends. The general education students express their enthusiasm and confidence as they develop understanding of the unique needs of the autistic students.

Each day, a copy of the activity and a photo are sent home with each student who participated in the program for that day. This helps to facilitate language for the autistic students and encourages non-disabled peers to share their activity with their family and friends. Outside the classroom in the hallway is a PAL showcase with photographs, artwork and writings of the student volunteers and autistic students. It is not unusual to see parents, students, and teachers at this showcase discussing the peer activity learning program with enthusiasm. This program has helped to remove social barriers for these special needs youngster and have brought them closer to the school community.

2. **List the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards*, including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards*, addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standards(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.**

Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards

Standard 1: All students will develop career planning and workplace readiness skills.

The student volunteers are developing employability skills and work habit skills such as dependability, promptness, flexibility, getting along with others and knowing when to ask for help. Several students have expressed a desire to become a special education teacher. The special needs students are learning social skills, i.e., getting along with others, social relatedness and cooperative play.

Standard 2: All students will use information, technology and other tools.

The student volunteers are assisting the autistic students' use the augmentative devices for communication. They are also seeking information in order to effectively work and play with the autistic students.

Standard 4: All students will demonstrate self-management skills.

The students in the PAL program are developing an understanding of their own personal strengths and needs. They are learning appropriate behaviors for cooperative work and play. The students are setting specific long and short-term goals in working with the autistic students as they learn new skills. This unique setting is helping the autistic students communicate their wants and needs in a natural setting rather than in a one-to-one teaching situation which tends to dominate their instruction.

Language Arts Literacy Standards

Standard 3.3 All students will speak in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and from for different audiences and purposes.

The autistic students must express their needs, wants and feelings to their non-disabled friends. They do this by gesturing, using communication devices, or oral language. The non-disabled students provide directions and instructions to the autistic students in a manner that the autistic students understand.

Standard 3.5 All students will access, view, evaluate, and respond to print, nonprint, and electronic tests and resources.

The photographs taken each day provide the visual information for the disabled and non-disabled students. These photos are shared with the students, friends and family of all participants in the program. Since the autistic students use various augmentative technologies, the volunteer peers are learning about technology utilized to assist this population.

3. **Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measure used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.**

Educational Needs

PAL addresses the needs of students in the autistic class. These students are non-verbal or have limited verbal skills. There is limited spontaneous language. Some of the students are learning to appropriately communicate their wants and needs with gestures, oral language or through the use of pictures or a computerized communication board. Some engage in stereotypic behaviors such as rocking or flapping arms. There is a lack of social and age appropriate play skills. Eye contact is a skill that must be taught as well as other discrete skills we take for granted in children. The students learn best with one-to-one instruction. However, it is important that they have opportunities to generalize what they are learning in the one-to-one situation in a more natural setting. This is provided in the PAL program.

Assessment

Data is taken throughout the day for each student in the autistic class. The data is reviewed daily to determine progress and to plan individualized instruction. Specifically for PAL, a data sheet has been developed with targeted behavioral goals for each autistic student (e.g., expresses wants and needs to peer appropriately). The special education teacher and aides oversee the peer activities and record appropriate responses for each student. This data is reviewed daily and graphed. Copies of the data sheets are sent home to the parents along with the discrete trial teaching data for the day. The data is indicating that the autistic students are increasing eye contact and are consistently using more modes of communication when the peer volunteers are present 50% of the time. Thus, communication and social competence is increasing.

The peer volunteers are required to maintain daily journals to record their feelings and accomplishments as they work and play with the autistic students. Monthly, the special education teacher and the regular education teachers meet to review the journals and note progress in meeting their personal goals, ability in handling challenges, and gaining insight and empathy in working and playing with their disabled peers.

4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

This program can be replicated in another school if there is a commitment to include the severely disabled students in the school community and a belief that all students have strengths and can learn. There also needs to be a commitment to facilitate friendships between severely disabled students and non-disabled students. Teachers, administrators, parents and students all need to be involved in supporting the program for it to be successful. This program fosters an educational environment where disabled youngsters are accepted and made a part of the school community. The students are accepted for their similarities as well as differences and for their abilities as well as their disabilities.

In order to start the program, there needs to be an orientation for teachers, parents and students that provides positive information about the unique needs of the disabled students with discussion on how this will provide a valuable learning experience for the non-disabled students. Only a few students, with the permission of the parents, need to volunteer at first. The success of the program, for the non-disabled students and the disabled students, will draw many more students eager to participate in such a rewarding and exciting program.